



EDUCATION & CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Education & Children's Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee held on Monday 23 February 2015 at 7.00 pm at Ground Floor Meeting Room G02A - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

PRESENT: Councillor Jasmine Ali (Chair)

Councillor Evelyn Akoto
Councillor Anne Kirby
Councillor James Okosun
Councillor Kath Whittam
Councillor Kieron Williams
Martin Brecknell
George Ogbonna

**OTHER MEMBERS
PRESENT:** Councillor Victoria Mills; Cabinet Member for Children and Schools

**OFFICER
& PARTNER
SUPPORT:** Rory Patterson, Director of Children's Social Care
Merril Hauseler, Director of Education
Dr Emma Gore Langton, Head of Education Service, PAC-UKs
Feyisa Demie, Head of Research, Lambeth Council
Edna Mathieson and Peter Chester, education researchers

1. APOLOGIES

1.1 There were no apologies for absence.

2. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT

2.1 There were no urgent items of business.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

3.1 There were no disclosures of interests or dispensations.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the summary of the decisions agreed at the of the meeting held on 14 January 2015 were agreed as a correct record.

5. CABINET MEMBER INTERVIEW: CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND SCHOOLS

5.1 The chair welcomed Councillor Victoria Mills; Cabinet Member for Children and Schools for her annual interview with the scrutiny sub committee is scheduled for 23 February 2015. Members of the committee chose eight themes to structure the interview around:

- Looked After Children & children in need, including preventing children being brought into care and supported housing for young people in need
- Schools: working with, Places, Attainment and holding to account
- Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision within the Borough, especially for Mental Health / Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD) and how the council is managing the transition from SEN Statements of Special to Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans.
- Lewisham Southwark College
- Children and Young People's health: Obesity, Teenage pregnancy statistics and strategy
- Safeguarding: Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
- Early years/nurseries

- Youth services & Young People that find our services impossible or difficult to access
- 5.2 The chair asked the cabinet lead what was going well and also how she had found the transition of responsibilities from her previous portfolio for economic wellbeing to her new one for children and schools. The chair commented that her previous portfolio was cross cutting and smaller, whereas her new portfolio is much larger, and asked if there was a cross over on promoting training and skills. The cabinet lead responding that she was pleased with the successful outcomes and huge work on school places to ensure people have choice. There has also been investment in Looked After Children and the number of children taking being into care is on a downward trend; there is a big piece of work of supporting children to stay at home and be supported.
- 5.3 A member commented that there are good schools, but a black hole for Lewisham Southwark College, which is performing abysmally. The cabinet lead responded that the council is working with sixth forms to improve the diversity of the offer. Since the poor Ofsted in 2013 the council have done a great deal of work going forward with college and have been clear that the offer from the FE College should look like. A member commented that officers have reported that the local 6ths forms are very academic and so do not cater for young people on a vocational path. The cabinet lead agreed that the borough does need a strong Further Education provider and there are practical restrictions that prevent some 6th Form offering more vocational courses, but where local 6th Forms can provide a broader curriculum the council are encouraging this. The cabinet member offered to provide a written response on setting out what the council want from a Further Education provider
- 5.4 The cabinet lead was asked about the lack of adequate services for Southwark children with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD). The cabinet lead said the borough has four specialist workers from CAMHS, and there have been no exclusions at primary school. The member mentioned his position as chair of governors at Beormund Primary EBD school and said there is a Southwark problem with providing enough places for local children. Local schools are not able to provide sufficient places for local children as they are full with children from outside the borough.
- 5.5 A member noted there is a growing problem of children and families moving out of the borough to access suitable and bigger housing, and then children travelling a long distance back to schools. Some families are refusing to leave hostels as they do not want to disrupt their children's education. The cabinet member undertook to flag up this concern up with the housing department and asked what support would be helpful. One member suggested

transport and help with transition, another member said the main issues is the availability of housing and asked if it was possible to prioritise families with children in Southwark schools.

- 5.6 A member raised the theme of early years and nursery provision and asked about the councils work on this. The cabinet lead responded that the council have commissioned an independent Childcare Commission, who will be publishing their report and recommendations next week. A member asked if there was room for optimism and the cabinet member said the council is looking forward to developing the council plan for two nurseries. She remarked that it is however a challenge to square quality and cost, and added that this is a national challenge. Both the Liberal Democrats and Labour are committed to protect funding for the under 5s, as this is such an important area. The GLA are also looking at other interrelated issues.
- 5.7 The theme of Youth Services was raised and the cabinet member indicated that she would be interested to know who suggested that theme. She reported that there had been a big investment in Youth Services and an increasing uptake of services and this is down to a devolved budget. She offered to provide a written response with figures and geographical locations of services, however the chair said that she would rather sit down and have a meeting.
- 5.8 A member asked what the council is doing to address FGM, and particularly in the West African community. Rory Paterson , Director of Children's Services, responded by saying the council has developed quite a close plan with Lewisham, however the partnership heard recently that a bid had not successful, and instead a bigger proposal from GLA and Barnardos won. The council are also working closely with Guys and St Thomas – and are receiving referrals from maternity. Social Services are also are picking up the signs from schools and universal services. The council needs to develop social worker referral pathways. Officers are also attending coffee mornings at Guy's & St Thomas Hospital to meet with women survivors. A member asked if the service is engages with faith and community groups and the director said that was very much part of the bid, and the partnership still want to take that forward.
- 5.9 A member asked how the council will ensure the provision of sufficient school places. The cabinet lead responded that the provisional place planning show that there is a surplus at primary school places, so there is some flexibility, however this masks some needs south of the borough. She explained that the council have been dealing with this through temporary places but these are to be extended to permanent places. We have a massive investment of 100 million pounds. Come 2019 there will be pressure at secondary school – the council is waiting the outcome of bids for the Dulwich Hospital site.

- 5.10 The committee raised concerns with levels of childhood obesity and a recent report indicated that 44 % of children are either overweight or obese on leaving primary school. The cabinet member agreed it was a great concern and that it is a problem that often starts in early years with 1 in 3 children entering school overweight. The council's healthy school meals, free fruit, support for breast feeding, and targeted support are some of the ways the council is working to reduce childhood obesity. She added that the council do need a clear strategy in place and this will come to cabinet in due course.
- 5.11 The cabinet member ended the interview by referring to recent report by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation on poverty that the chair had flagged up, and indicated that she agreed it was very important.

6. SEND REPORT

- 6.1 Merrill Hauseler, Director of Education, and officers from her department presented the SEND report. The chair then invited members to ask questions.
- 6.2 The Director was asked how she intended to address the challenges of too few educational psychologists and ensuring that assessment and planning for the new Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP) take less than 20 weeks. She responded that the SEND and transition team are devoting new ways of working; the 20 weeks standard is important but can be challenging.
- 6.3 Officers were asked more on the Local Offer website and how they intended to improve this. Officer said the aim is for the Local Offer website to be the place where people go to for everything they might need. There is a training function whereby people can book on the website. There was a Ministry of Sound consultation event with young people where officers listened to what young people want. The SEND team are looking now at developing the post 26 offer, so people have a seamless service. There is a transition pathway being developed. A member commented that parents say it can be hard to access high quality support as they become adults. Officers said that support has now been extended to over 25.
- 6.4 A member said she was a governor at a school and feedback is that schools get money backdated for children with SEND and this is a continual problem. She asked what has been done to resolve

this. Officers responded that there is some funding for low level support and also some additional support with a CAMHS and SEND advisor. Officers can also help schools with SEND planning. The director said that the council does make the funding available quickly, but the criteria are tough to access this funding.

- 6.5 Officers were asked about SENCO support and officers said that the council have six SENCO's who are mentoring and training others.
- 6.6 A member remarked that the process for schools looked satisfactory; however she wanted to know if there was a process in place for continual improvement. An officer said there are arrangements in place for parents to give ongoing feedback, but she will also include schools; she agreed that an ongoing process for improvement was good practice.
- 6.7 Officers were asked how the movement to more school autonomy through Pupil Premium is going with schools. The Director of Education said it was a huge change, but going very well. A member said he knew of a family where the child has autism and asked if they would be able to use the services of an out of borough provider. Officer explained that any parent has a right to express a preference however officers do need to consider resources and suitability. The member asked if independent advice is available and officer said it absolutely was.
- 6.8 A member asked if the council was sharing good practice and officers responded that there is some work on this, mainly with Lambeth Council, but the main focus is on making Southwark stronger.
- 6.9 A member referred to his earlier comment during the cabinet member interview on the need to adequately meet the needs of children with Emotional & Behaviour Disorder (EBD) and said there was a live issue he was discussing with the Director of Education.
- 6.10 A member said she was looking forward to the new Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP) really making a difference.

7. REVIEW: ATTAINMENT GAP - EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING FOR SCHOOL LEAVERS

7.1 The officer due to attend this evening sent apologies due to a bereavement .

8. REVIEW: ATTAINMENT GAP - 'TACKLING WHITE WORKING CLASS UNDER ACHIEVEMENT'

8.1 The chair invited Feyisa Demie to introduce his paper on raising the Achievement of White Working Class children. He explained that the research unit at Lambeth Council combined statistical analysis with examining the good practice of Lambeth Schools in tackling underachievement. The research unit has looked at a range of underachieving groups of young people and the council shares good practice at a national level. In 2010 the unit decided to focus on white working class children in Lambeth. Funding was raised from outside and research was conducted with about 13 schools, this included interviews with a number of children, parents and teachers. The first issue was a lack of aspiration. The second barrier was a lack of parental involvement with schools. The third issue was marginalization - for example there is now no pub in Stockwell catering for the white working class community . The last issues was poverty - for example people on benefit for long time .

8.2 There is no specific targeted support for white working class children. The report found there is particularly a need for additional English and language support. The schools showing the best practice had white working class role models , for example head-teachers and teachers .

8.3 He concluded by saying that white working class children are the social-economic group that is most underachieving, both in Lambeth and nationally. A conference highlighting the research findings attracted over 200 people.

8.4 The chair invited local education researchers, Edna Mathieson and Peter Chester, to present their paper. Edna Mathieson emphasised the point made by Feyisa Demie on language and suggested that the committee look at the work of Bernstein on Language and Social Class. She also spoke about the impact of widening inequality and mentioned several books, including 'The Spirit

Level', which showed that Britain was the most unequal country in Europe and the Owen Jones book on 'Chavs-The demonization of the working class'.

- 8.5 A member picked up on low rates of literacy and fluency and asked the education researcher to expand. Feyisa Demie spoke about different levels of language development and the need for additional language support. The member commented that she did not think there was enough work done to distinguish the particular language needs of deprived communities, for example the needs of white working class children to receive additional language support , and the need for adult education support for some parents who had low literacy levels.
- 8.6 It was noted that sometimes it is said that a broad ethnic and immigrant mix drives down standards, but the evidence is that actually the opposites - ethnic mix drives up standards. It is also important to observe that the traditional white working class could thrive in an old economy; however this group is now very adversely impacted by changes to the world economy.
- 8.7 A member remarked that the evidence has been there for some time that there is lack of attainment among white working class children and Bangladeshi children. He asked about the range of groups not attaining. Feyisa Demie said that we need to look at all underachievement and said that he has been examining a range of groups, such as African children.
- 8.8 The chair thanked the presenters and said she would like to see similar research done in Southwark. Feyisia Demi commented that local authorities need good data to challenge under-achievement , however the DfE really needs to target white working class children for targeted support.

9. REVIEW: ADOPTION - REPORT AND PRESENTATION FROM PAC-UK

- 9.1 Dr Emma Gore Langton, Head of Education Service, presented on PAC-UKs work supporting permanently placed children in education. The chair then invited questions.
- 9.2 A member suggested their was a distinction between the

secondary and primary schools, and the later were more able to provide the relationships and support that permanently placed children often need. The member added that in her experience schools do understand the issues. The Head of Education agreed that secondary is more difficult for children and it could be that primary schools are more intimate, or more skilful, at meeting the needs of permanently placed children. She advised that all schools are reached through their programme and she recommended a blanket approach, and added that often the parents will flag up the additional support available, while schools are not aware.

- 9.3 A member asked what worked best in schools and she said that an awareness of how neglect, abuse, and loss impacts children's learning, alongside good structures within school to provide support, rather than excessive changes, and high quality relationships.
- 9.4 The chair thanked the Head of Education for her time and promised to send the draft report for comment.

10. REVIEW : ADOPTION - TIMELINESS OF ADOPTION

- 10.1 The report was noted.

11. REVIEW: ATTAINMENT GAP - SURVEY RESULTS

- 11.1 The report was noted.

12. REVIEW: FREE HEALTHY SCHOOL MEALS

- 12.1 This item was deferred until the next meeting.

13. WORK-PLAN

- 13.1 The chair recommended that the committee hold a Policy Seminar on the committee's reports to refine the recommendations and to act as an early 'soft launch'.

RESOLVED

A Policy Seminar will be held on 14 April.